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Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

Contents

Agenda item 107: Advancement of women* (*continued*)

Agenda item 108: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"* (*continued*)

* Items which the Committee had decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 107: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/55/3, A/55/38, A/55/138-S/2000/693, A/55/162-S/2000/715, A/55/271, 293, 308, 322, 385 and 399; A/C.3/55/3 and 4)

Agenda item 108: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/55/74, A/55/162-S/2000/715 and A/55/341; A/C.3/55/4)

1. **Mr. Adekanye** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the special session of the General Assembly on women held in June 2000, had advanced the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by providing an opportunity to identify the areas of progress and the continuing challenges and to propose further action. The special session had demonstrated the value of international cooperation in pursuing the goals of gender equality and advancement of women.

2. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, critical progress had been made in focusing attention on the issue of women and poverty and in initiating national programmes that addressed the needs of women. Policies and legal and institutional reforms had been adopted to stop violence against women, especially in the extreme form of trafficking.

3. Old obstacles persisted, however. Women remained impoverished because they bore the brunt of the constraints imposed by the debt burden on many developing countries. Debt-relief efforts had not yielded the desired result, whereas outright debt cancellation would free resources for development. Globalization posed a further challenge. The combined impact of globalization and structural adjustment had increased the feminization of poverty and undermined efforts to achieve gender equality, making it urgent to devise innovative approaches that would include gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes, as well as education, skills training and consciousness-raising.

4. The HIV/AIDS pandemic that was devastating developing countries, particularly in Africa, was having a severe impact on women and children. The recently adopted Millennium Declaration, complementing the initiatives set out in the final outcome document of the special session on women, had set a welcome target date for halting and reversing the spread of that and other dread diseases.

5. Non-governmental organizations and other groups in civil society, sustaining the momentum generated in the various world conferences on women, had also been working to promote the empowerment of women. The collaboration between those groups and governments should continue.

6. The Group of 77 was very concerned by the threatened closure of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), one of only three United Nations bodies located in a developing country, before the Institute could achieve its objective. The Group was committed to revitalizing INSTRAW and ensuring its survival.

7. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to the creation of a supportive environment in its member countries for the empowerment of women, and called once again for adequate resources at the national, regional and international levels, in order to ensure that the various undertakings made by Member States, especially during the special session, would be translated into action.

8. **Mr. An Myong Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking on agenda item 108, observed that in the past year, in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, national strategies and programmes for the advancement of women had been established, international cooperation had been promoted and women's issues had been taken into account in most United Nations activities.

9. Nevertheless, women were still the targets of exploitation and persecution. They were the first victims of globalization, subject as they were to poverty, illiteracy and marginalization. The widening gap between rich and poor under the new global economic system denied women their basic rights such as employment, education, health care or housing. Furthermore, violence against women had become a serious social problem throughout the world, with trafficking, rape and prostitution a common occurrence, often under the control of crime syndicates. Systematic rape had now become a common wartime weapon. In that regard, the Japanese Government, whose military forces had in the previous century committed notorious

crimes against Korean women had yet to make an apology or acknowledge its responsibility to offer compensation, thus fomenting a climate of domestic violence against women, including the Korean residents of Japan.

10. At the start of the new millennium, it was crucial, if the targets spelt out by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were to be achieved, that each country should adopt a proper attitude on women, recognizing their equality with men and their right to involvement in the management of the State and of social activities. Only then would it be possible to eliminate outdated social practices, adopt laws protecting and promoting women's rights, and introduce social policies favouring the well-being of women. One of his Government's first acts after the country's liberation in 1946 had been to adopt legislation on gender equality, the upbringing of children and the family that reflected its social policy of respect for women and its commitment to their advancement. As a result, the women of his country now freely shared in governance and social activities and had equal employment opportunities, with full access to education and the health-care system.

11. **Ms. Fritsche** (Liechtenstein) welcomed the new targets for the advancement of women set by the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the most important event of the year for the cause of women. The outcome document had highlighted the importance of increasing the representation of women in key bodies and processes at both the national and international levels. One of the new targets was gender balance in all United Nations posts. It was particularly important to involve women in decision-making at all levels, as well as in peacekeeping missions and peace negotiations and as special envoys or representatives of the Secretary-General. That point had been stressed by the women heads of State and government who had met for the first time at the Millennium Summit with the women heads of United Nations agencies. The special session had also reaffirmed the responsibility of governments to create a gender-sensitive legal environment and carry out policies guaranteeing women's enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

12. The entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, one of the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action, would enhance the relevance of the Convention, and its communication and inquiry procedures would serve both an educational and a practical purpose. Adequate resources would, of course, now be required to enable the Committee in question and the Division for the Advancement of Women to deal with the additional workload.

13. In the past year, there had been a modest improvement in the status of women in the Secretariat, but the goal of equal gender distribution had not been reached, despite the efforts made. Particular attention should therefore be paid to the gender action plans established by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and by the Office of Human Resources Management.

14. The HIV/AIDS epidemic was an urgent foreign-policy issue with humanitarian, security, economic and development implications that surpassed the competence of any one country. The pandemic was destroying the economic and social fabric of the countries most affected, reversing years of declining death rates and causing dramatic rises in mortality among young adults. It was common knowledge that it had a disproportionate impact on women and children, and therefore the efforts to integrate gender awareness into HIV/AIDS policy at national and local levels was welcome. Member States must make education, testing, counselling and treatment more readily available to affected women and girls.

15. In general, concrete progress for women depended on the collective and individual political will of the Member States.

16. **Ms. Nicodemos** (Brazil) observed that the great feminist revolution of the twentieth century, starting with the first World Conference on Women, in 1975, had brought about profound changes in societies the world over, advancing equal rights and opportunities in almost all spheres of life. In the process, the United Nations had been crucial in helping to raise awareness of women's rights, design a new agenda for gender issues and incorporate a gender perspective into all human activities. The various United Nations bodies dealing with women's issues were to be commended for what they had achieved. The cycle of conferences on women held under the United Nations auspices, together with other major United Nations conferences in the social and human rights fields had generated the momentum for change. The twenty-third special

session of the General Assembly was the most recent example of the Organization's creative energy in matters relating to gender issues.

17. The task of the special session — to assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, to identify current challenges and to propose new initiatives — had not been easy, but the outcome had exceeded expectations. Its outcome document, in conjunction with the Beijing Platform for Action, enshrined an ideal and constituted one of the most comprehensive set of guidelines for the international community, Governments, non-governmental organizations and society as a whole in their efforts to promote the advancement and empowerment of women. Another milestone in the quest for women's rights had been the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

18. Brazil had actively sought to promote gender equality and human rights in general, and her Government's open dialogue with organizations in civil society had framed the actions taken. As indicated in Brazil's report to the twenty-third special session, women and girls in Brazil were better off than in 1995, having more access to education, jobs, special health care, political participation and the media, and more means to protect themselves against domestic violence and obtain legal assistance.

19. Yet women still faced many challenges. Their salaries still lagged behind those of men, there were very few women in decision-making positions, illiteracy and mortality rates were still high among adult women and, most difficult of all, the traditional conception of women's relationship with men needed to be recast on an equal footing. It was to be hoped that the twenty-first century would be the one in which women came into their own.

20. **Mrs. Dhurgana** (Nepal) said that the empowerment of women was the chief prerequisite for the eradication of poverty. But in developing countries especially, women still faced daunting barriers to progress caused by illiteracy, poor health and traditionally conservative attitudes. Few women had any effective right to property, access to quality education or the opportunity to meet their special health needs. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, the United Nations had led efforts to identify which kinds of action were needed in order to implement the Platform for Action. It had striven to improve the socio-economic status of women and to bring them into equal partnership with men. The outcome document of the special session indicated further initiatives which were needed in order to implement the Platform for Action in the context of globalization. Nepal fully supported the measures for the empowerment of women mentioned in those documents.

21. As a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Nepal had revised its legislation to bring it into conformity with the Convention. Its chosen priorities for empowering women were to secure adequate legal provision for the protection and promotion of women's rights; education, skill training and entrepreneurship activities for women; reproductive health care; effective social awareness and administrative measures to eliminate violence against women and trafficking in women; and the active participation of women in national policy-making and government. Nepal encouraged both governmental and non-governmental organizations to be active in preventing all forms of violence against women. Women's concerns had increasingly been taken into account in development efforts in general, and in project formulation and implementation in particular. A number of programmes targeted specifically at women had been launched in the areas of health, education and income generation. The Government was also considering establishing a commission on women. The political parties had introduced special quotas for women in order to increase their participation in politics. To combat the growing problem of trafficking in women and children, Nepal was working towards a regional convention for the countries of South Asia.

22. In spite of the progress made in several areas, the overall status of women in Nepalese society still left much to be desired. The gender gap in education had still to be closed, and the representation of women in politics, decision-making and the public service remained low. She urged the international community to provide adequate support for Nepal's endeavours to achieve gender equality in every aspect of national development. At the same time, she emphasized the important role played by women in the family, which operated as a social safety net and which instilled societal values. In preserving those values, women held both the family and society together.

23. **Ms. Samah** (Algeria) said that the special session on women had proved to be a new milestone in the protracted struggle of women worldwide to free themselves from their shackles and from the prejudices which prevented them from playing a full part in society. The final document adopted by the special session was the crowning touch to the Beijing Platform for Action. It showed that considerable progress had been achieved in a number of areas, but a number of the activities set forth for each of the 12 critical areas of concern had not been fully implemented on the ground, nor had all the chosen objectives been achieved within the set time frames, because of the various obstacles encountered since 1995. The special session had also identified a range of issues which had emerged or acquired fresh significance since the Fourth World Conference on Women, such as globalization, economic imbalances, the negative implications of structural-adjustment programmes or the new communication technologies. Common action was needed to overcome those problems and to ensure that the benefits of globalization were distributed equitably. The initiatives and measures agreed at the special session constituted the response of the international community to those new challenges.

24. The responsibility for implementing the final document lay with Governments. For many developing countries, that meant that the international environment, and especially the economic climate, must be kinder towards them. In turn, that called for international cooperation. The United Nations occupied a key position in that regard, especially in development matters, but needed the resources to carry out its role. To ensure that the results of the special session were followed up within the respective mandates of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women, the work of the three organs must be more closely coordinated, so that they supplemented each other's work while avoiding duplication. As the principal organ responsible for following up the Beijing Platform for Action and the results of the special session, the Commission on the Status of Women should be reinforced to enable it to perform adequately.

25. In striving to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, Algeria had been successful in achieving the objectives set with regard to school enrolment, vocational training, improved access to health care, including reproductive and child health, and bringing more women into public life and decision-making. In spite of the progress achieved, the public authorities were conscious of the need to maintain the momentum. They were endeavouring to consolidate the gains made by combating the shortcomings in society so that women could enjoy full independence and take charge of their own lives.

26. **Ms. Nguyen Thanh Ha** (Viet Nam) said that the recent special session on women, and the Millennium Summit, had shown a commitment at the highest level to the advancement of women. She welcomed the description in the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/341) of the various forms of action required of the United Nations system organizations to implement the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the special session. Meanwhile, the Committee should pursue its analysis of national practices and concerns, in order to help define appropriate global policies to achieve the objectives set out in the final document of the special session and the Millennium Declaration. In that regard, she agreed with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

27. Viet Nam was now reviewing its National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Vietnamese Women by 2000, and was developing a second National Plan of Action for completion by 2010. Encouraging results had been achieved. Twenty-six per cent of the seats in the national legislature were held by women; women now had legal capacity to contract; the literacy rate among women was over 80 per cent; and 90 per cent of urban births now took place in health facilities. However, the country remained poor, and women in Viet Nam, especially ethnic-minority women in isolated rural areas, still had to face great hardship in their daily lives. Women accounted for almost 80 per cent of the agricultural workforce, and the majority of Vietnamese women lived in rural areas. In terms of education and health they lagged behind men, although the disparities were fewer than in many countries whose gross national product was similar. Although the overall rate of malnutrition in Viet Nam was falling, the nutritional gap between men and women was increasing.

28. The Government was taking full account of those factors in developing its second National Plan of Action, which was being closely coordinated with the national socio-economic development strategy to 2010. With financial assistance from the United Nations

Development Programme, the National Committee for the Advancement of Women was undertaking a comprehensive gender analysis of the strategy with a view to making recommendations for gender mainstreaming. All government ministries and non-governmental organizations in the country were taking part in that process, and representatives of international non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and donor institutions were also invited to participate.

29. In addition to national policy and legislation, it was also considered essential to increase women's awareness of their rights and to promote their active participation in all aspects of life. Special programmes were being offered to poor women, especially in rural and remote areas, providing information on such topics as health care, income generation and the management of household income.

30. **Mr. Melenevsky** (Ukraine) commended the work of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. He welcomed the common strategy adopted by the special session on women, and was anxious to see Governments incorporating into their national legislation international standards on the advancement of women, such as those embodied in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Ukraine, which had signed the Optional Protocol, was convinced that gender equality was the basis for democracy and social justice, as well as for the protection of human rights. Under the Constitution of Ukraine, women were provided with equal opportunities in social, political and cultural activities and in education and vocational training. Special measures protected women's employment and health and afforded them pension advantages, so that they could combine paid work with motherhood. Ukraine was endeavouring to create a framework of legislation reflecting international human rights standards. The Government had adopted a declaration on general principles of State policy on women and the family, and the relevant national institutions were working with the Parliament to adopt an outline plan for improving the situation of women in Ukraine. A National Plan for the Advancement of Women for 2001-2004 had been prepared, in the light of the final documents of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the recent special session.

31. Women in Ukraine made a signal contribution to the formation of a democratic civil society. Their situation reflected the difficulties experienced by the country in developing a market economy. Statistics indicated that 12 per cent of women were victims of domestic violence, either physical or psychological. Trafficking in women and girls, a punishable offence under the criminal law of Ukraine, was an international problem. He welcomed United Nations initiatives to combat the phenomenon. Urging the international community to cooperate with those efforts, he drew the attention of international organizations and donor countries to Ukraine's need for financial and technical assistance in order to address the problems of trafficking.

32. In conclusion, he pointed to the need for men to be directly involved in practical activities which brought a gender perspective to bear on everyday realities.

33. **Mrs. Suñé** (Andorra) emphasized the importance of the special session on women and said that, for the first time in its history as a Member of the United Nations, the delegation of Andorra had been composed of representatives of both the Government and non-governmental organizations.

34. Andorra had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to be considered during 2001, and was progressing towards signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

35. With regard to the Political Declaration adopted at the special session, Andorra intended to work towards reducing violence against women and believed that that could only be achieved by global awareness-raising, reinforced by specific educational programmes emphasizing gender equality. In that regard, it was in total agreement with the objective of reducing the number of girls who did not complete primary education.

36. It supported all the initiatives designed to promote programmes relating to trafficking in women and girls. Moreover, concerned by the havoc caused by AIDS among both women and men, above all in Africa, it joined those who were requesting the international community to establish a plan of action to prevent the disease and improve the lives of those affected.

37. Andorra also supported those initiatives designed to facilitate women's access to management and decision-making in political and economic spheres.

38. **Ms. Afifi** (Morocco) said that the 1995 Beijing Conference had emphasized the importance of women's contribution to the promotion of democratic values and the prosperity of their countries. Since then, the promotion of women had made considerable progress due to the efforts of all those concerned. However, deeply-rooted attitudes and practices continued to perpetuate gender inequality, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries, where extreme poverty, aggravated by the effects of illiteracy, AIDS and the dearth of basic social services, affected a great many women and deprived them of the exercise of their most elemental rights. Consequently, such countries were unable to ensure the promotion of women and their integration into development without the support of the international community.

39. The improvement of the status of women had always been among Morocco's national development policies, and it had therefore taken an active participation in the preparatory meetings for the special session on women. From the outset of his reign, H.M. King Mohammed VI had emphasized the need to integrate women into development in order to reinforce the equality of their social, economic and political rights. Gender equality was among the objectives of Morocco's current five-year plan, particularly in the areas of health and education; as a result, a considerable number of women were present in all spheres of national activity, including key positions in the legislature, executive and judiciary.

40. Morocco had also undertaken several other farsighted measures including legislative reform, the review of certain legal texts on the status of women in order to harmonize them with international instruments, and the strengthening of existing national institutional mechanisms that favoured the promotion of women. Moreover, there had been a systematic integration of a gender-specific approach into the preparation of statistics; the education of girls, particularly in rural areas, had been strengthened; an important international project to promote women and the family had been signed; studies were being conducted on women in politics and on improving the image of women in the media; and a chair on women and development had been created in the University of Rabat.

41. **Ms. Abbas** (Indonesia) said that her country was committed to working towards new targets set out in the final documents of the special session on women. Those in the area of education were of particular importance, as was the need to mainstream a gender perspective into national environmental policies and programmes in order to solve problems of environmental degradation. Indeed, the documents resulting from the session would offer valuable input to discussions at the "Rio+10" Conference.

42. Gender mainstreaming was one of the principal elements of Indonesia's national development policies and there were five major priority issues on its national agenda for empowering women: empowerment of women in the three strategic areas of education, health and strengthened access to development resources; respect for the dignity and human rights of women; and improving institutional capacity to manage women's development programmes.

43. Her delegation supported the activities of UNIFEM and welcomed the international community's increasing attention to the problem of violence against women and the move towards an international "zero tolerance" policy. Indonesia had adopted such a policy at the national level and had established mechanisms to promote it. It was working to review its laws, including the marriage law, to remove any provisions that impeded the attainment of full gender equality. It was also addressing the situation of Indonesian migrant workers, most of whom were women.

44. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that, despite the progress made since the first World Conference, in 1975, violence and exploitation of women still remained endemic in all societies and both affluence and poverty appeared to have contributed to the phenomenon, in particular with regard to trafficking in women and girls.

45. The special session had identified the feminization of poverty, globalization and gender-based violence as some of the challenges requiring priority response. The perpetrators of human rights violations against women and girls under foreign occupation and situations of armed conflict deserved exemplary punishment to deter their recurrence.

46. Pakistan attached high priority to gender equality and empowerment of women; women ministers currently held seven important portfolios in the Government. Since the Beijing Conference, it had

focused attention on reviewing and consolidating policy for the advancement of women and strengthening administrative actions.

47. In August, the Government had established the permanent National Commission on the Status of Women with the mandate to assess government policies, programmes and other measures related to gender equality; review all laws and regulations affecting the status and rights of women and make recommendations; monitor the mechanisms and institutional procedures for redressing the violation of women's rights and contribute to improving the provision of justice and social services; encourage and sponsor research on gender issues to provide input for policies and strategic action, and develop and maintain interaction and dialogue with non-governmental organizations, experts and individuals in the area of gender equality.

48. The Government had recently announced the establishment of district governments, and reserved 33 per cent of the seats on all elected bodies for women candidates. It had also strengthened efforts to reduce poverty, with a focus on reducing the feminization of poverty. Lastly, convinced that universal access to quality education was the most effective vehicle to achieve the empowerment and equality of women, it was promoting universal literacy, with special attention to the girl child.

49. **Mr. Al-Rubaie** (Iraq) said that the rights of women had been recognized in Iraqi legislation since the code of Hammurabi had been established nearly 4,000 years ago. Iraq was a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had incorporated its provisions into national legislation. However, all the progress made by Iraqi women had been undermined by the maintenance of the sanctions that had been imposed on Iraq for the past 10 years, destroying the national infrastructure and every aspect of life, as was attested in the reports of numerous international organizations.

50. Maternal and infant mortality rates had risen steeply, the majority of pregnant women suffered from anaemia and the number of babies of very low birth weight had increased, as had the incidence of thyroid problems, hepatitis and premature deliveries. Respiratory problems in women and children had increased exponentially.

51. The use of depleted uranium during the 30-Power aggression had poisoned the environment and was responsible for the huge number of cases of cancer among women, as well as the incidence of miscarriage, sterility and fetal abnormalities.

52. Iraq had submitted its second and third periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and that Committee, while commending Iraq's endeavours aimed at the promotion of women, had remarked on the negative effects of the sanctions on the economic and social situation in the country and particularly on women.

53. In view of the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the sanctions, the international community had a responsibility to give that issue the attention it deserved. The genocide resulting from the insistence of the United States of America and the United Kingdom on maintaining the sanctions in order to pursue their own policies contravened all the relevant human rights instruments.

54. **Ms. Zhang Youyoun** (Director, Bureau for Gender Equality, International Labour Office) said that globalization had not delivered social progress to all and had, in fact, widened gender inequality and posed new vulnerabilities for women. The ILO considered that all women were working women and bore the brunt of social costs and human suffering in times of economic crisis and armed conflict. Equal pay for work of equal value had still not been achieved and women continued to be a minority in executive and managerial positions.

55. The special session on women had called for national and international action to respect, promote and realize the principles contained in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up. It had urged Governments to strongly consider ratification and full implementation of the ILO conventions that had specific relevance to women's rights in the workplace, all of which strengthened the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and would play a role in the implementation of the Optional Protocol. ILO would work hard to follow up on that recommendation in collaboration with its constituent partners, United Nations agencies and other actors of civil society.

56. The "Beijing+5" Review Conference had shown that gender equality and women's rights had gained

recognition and that discussion of gender issues had deepened. Gender equality should remain central to both international and national development agencies; the advancement of women required multilateral agencies to take an integrated approach designed to secure the widest possible collaboration and partnership between official and voluntary organizations.

57. The ILO's response to the social and economic challenges of globalization, the global imperative for poverty eradication and the need for women and men to realize their fundamental rights and freedoms was encapsulated in the concept of "decent work", which asserted that social progress would only be achieved if the global economy enabled all women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. ILO had started to operationalize the concept by introducing and strengthening gender-sensitive budgeting at national and organizational levels; promoting gender issues in people-centred sustainable development, and enhancing the capacity to design gender-sensitive policies and implement programmes that advanced gender equality; and strengthening social dialogue and building partnerships on issues of gender equality and justice.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.